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President Donald Trump invoked the case repeatedly during his 2016 campaign as part of his rhetoric against illegal immigration. | Jorge Silva/AFP/Getty Images

Trump: Kate Steinle 'killer' re-entered U.S. through 'weakly protected Obama border'

By **AKELA LACY** and **KRISTEN EAST** | 11/30/2017 10:10 PM EST | Updated 12/01/2017 08:56 AM EST

President Donald Trump complained Friday morning that the immigration history of a Mexican man acquitted of the 2015 murder of Kate Steinle was not presented to a jury in the case, blaming his predecessor for the man's repeated reentry into the U.S. over a "weakly protected Obama border."

"The Kate Steinle killer came back and back over the weakly protected Obama border, always committing crimes and being violent, and yet this info was not used in court. His exoneration is a complete travesty of justice. BUILD THE WALL!" Trump wrote on Twitter

Friday morning. "The jury was not told the killer of Kate was a 7 time felon. The Schumer/Pelosi Democrats are so weak on Crime that they will pay a big price in the 2018 and 2020 Elections."

On Thursday evening, Trump labeled the acquittal "a disgraceful verdict," responding to a case that is often discussed by Trump and among those with hard-line stances on immigration.

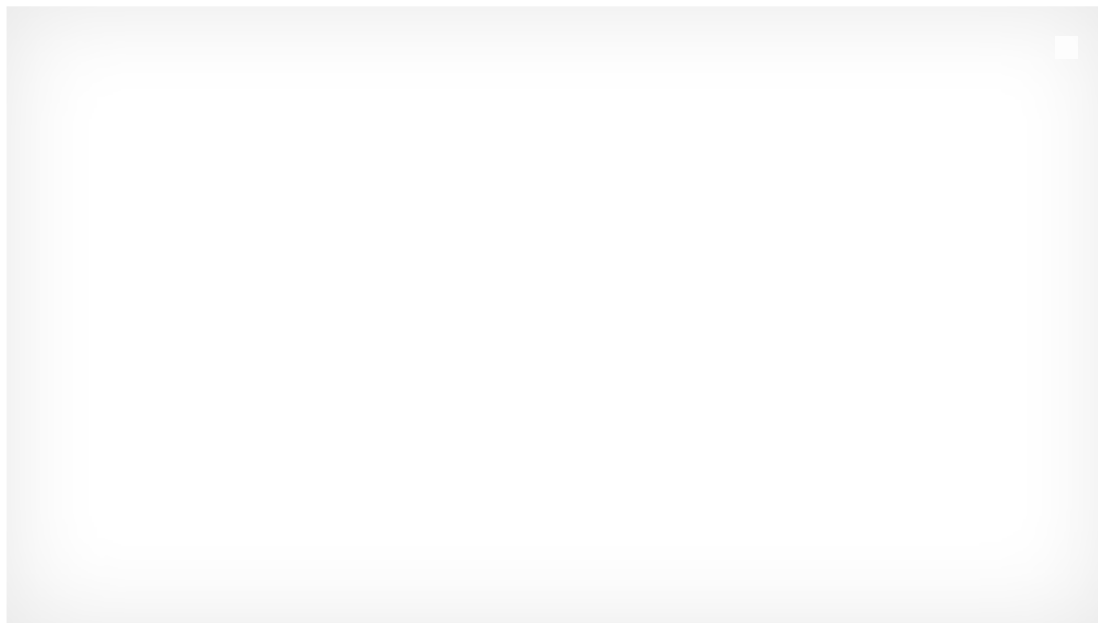
"A disgraceful verdict in the Kate Steinle case! No wonder the people of our Country are so angry with Illegal Immigration," Trump tweeted Thursday night.

Steinle, 32, was walking with her father on a San Francisco pier when she was shot in the back by Jose Ines Garcia Zarate, a homeless, undocumented immigrant who was wanted for his sixth deportation at the time. Zarate's defense team claimed he accidentally fired the gun and the bullet ricocheted off concrete.

Despite a federal immigration request for his detention, Zarate had been released from jail by the San Francisco sheriff's department before the shooting. He had a history of nonviolent crimes.

Following Steinle's murder, San Francisco became a flashpoint in a national debate over immigration and so-called "sanctuary cities." Trump invoked the case repeatedly during his 2016 campaign as part of his rhetoric against illegal immigration.

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Attorney General Jeff Sessions, too, slammed the decision.

“When jurisdictions choose to return criminal aliens to the streets rather than turning them over to federal immigration authorities, they put the public’s safety at risk,” a statement from Sessions read.

Zarate’s attorneys argued that after he found the gun at the San Francisco waterfront, a shot accidentally deflected off the ground, hitting Steinle in what amounted to a tragic accident. Prosecutors argued that Zarate intentionally shot Steinle. Zarate was convicted on a charge of being a felon in possession of a gun.

The decision to release Zarate “led to the preventable and heartbreaking death of Kate Steinle,” Sessions’ statement continues.

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“While the State of California sought a murder charge for the man who caused Ms. Steinle’s death — a man who would not have been on the streets of San Francisco if they city simply honored an ICE detainer — the people ultimately convicted him of felon in possession of a firearm.

“The Department of Justice will continue to ensure that all jurisdictions place the safety and security of their communities above the convenience of criminal aliens. I urge the leaders of the nation’s communities to reflect on the outcome of this case and consider carefully the harm they are doing to their citizens by refusing to cooperate with federal law enforcement officers.”

On Friday Rep Steve King of Iowa, an immigration hard-liner, also denounced the verdict.

“The illegal alien who, no one disagrees, killed Kate Steinle is found NOT guilty in sanctuary city, San Francisco. Sickening! I will spare no effort to do my own killing-of all amnesty in every form!” the Republican tweeted.

